

Department of Health

The Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)

Nicknames: Seed ticks

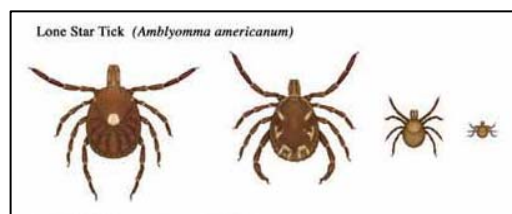


The **lone star tick** (*Amblyomma americanum*) lives primarily in the southeast and south-central regions of the United States and can spread ehrlichiosis. This species of tick is not commonly found in Vermont but it does live here, as well as other areas of the Northeast. Both nymphs and adult ticks will bite humans and are associated with the transmission of ehrlichiosis and tularemia.

Where in the United States is the lone star tick found?

Lone star ticks are most commonly distributed throughout the southeastern and south-central parts of the United States, though recently they have been found in abundance as far west as Texas and as far north as Maine.

What does the lone star tick look like?



Lone star ticks are generally larger than deer ticks and woodchuck ticks and have wide, tannish-red bodies (3-4mm, unfed). Female ticks are easily identified since they have a prominent light-colored spot in the center of their backs, and males have faint, lighter-colored markings on their edges of their backs. Nymphs are smaller and redder in color than adults.

What are the hosts of the lone star tick?

Lone star ticks will feed on most mammals. Nymphs and adults are more likely to be found on deer and other large mammals, while larvae and nymphs usually feed on birds and medium-sized mammals such as skunks, opossums, raccoons, squirrels and foxes. Larvae, nymphs and adults have all been known to feed on people.

When are lone star ticks most active?

Adults are most active in the springtime, when they are looking for a blood meal and preparing to lay eggs. Larvae hatch from the eggs laid in spring and take their first blood meal during late summer and early fall. Nymphs are active between April and June since they must find a host and take a blood meal before molting into an adult. High temperatures and low humidity usually decrease tick activity.

What is the ideal habitat of lone star ticks?

Lone star ticks can be found in wooded areas, usually where there is thick undergrowth and shrubbery. Meadows, brushy paths and vegetation along the edges of lakes and streams are suitable habitats for lone star ticks.

What diseases can lone star ticks carry?

The lone star tick is recognized for transmitting ehrlichiosis and tularemia. This tick species does not transmit Lyme disease, but may carry a disease called STARI (Southern Tick Associated Rash Illness). STARI results in a rash similar to the rash of Lyme disease, without the other symptoms of Lyme disease. STARI has not been documented in Vermont.

How do you prevent tick bites?

While outdoors,

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts to minimize skin exposure to ticks.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to form a barrier to tick attachment.
- Wear light-colored clothing to help see ticks on your clothing.
- Check for ticks, looking particularly for what may look like nothing more than a new freckle or speck of dirt, and remove ticks promptly.
- Use an effective tick and insect repellents on your skin or on your clothing. There are several repellents that are effective against ticks. Repellents should not be used on infants under 2 months of age. Read the label carefully and use according to the recommendations on the label.

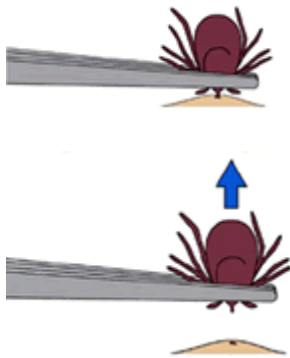
After you come inside,

- Check your or your child's body for ticks, and remove them promptly. Pay special attention to the head, armpits, and groin area.
- Find and remove ticks
- Examine clothing, gear and pets for ticks.

How do you remove ticks?

Try to remove the tick as soon as you discover it because prompt removal can prevent transmission of tick-borne diseases.

To safely remove ticks:



1. Use fine-tipped tweezers and firmly grasp the tick close to the skin. Avoid touching the tick with your bare hands

2. With a steady motion, pull straight up until all parts of the tick are removed. Do not twist or jerk the tick. Do not be alarmed if the tick's mouthparts remain in the skin. Once the mouthparts are removed from the rest of the tick, it can no longer transmit the disease-causing bacteria.

DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products to remove a tick. These methods are not effective.

Thoroughly wash your hands and the bite area

After removing the tick, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Clean the tick bite with soap and water or use an antiseptic such as iodine scrub or rubbing alcohol.